

MAR 26 1966

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Affairs of State, by Stewart Alsop

## Battling Bobby Baker

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**R**obert Gene Baker, usually known as Bobby, is one of those people who seem to thrive on adversity. Only in his late 30's, he is closely threatened by baldness. But his face is pink and healthy, he is as nattily dressed as ever, and his eyes, at once shrewd and humorous, dart constantly about as he surveys the scene around him with wary curiosity.

When he was Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson's principal assistant, Bobby Baker was a friend of mine, as he was of a great many Washington reporters. I liked him then, and I like him now, even though he is under indictment for crimes and misdemeanors which could theoretically send him to jail for 48 years.

Whether he is guilty of those crimes and misdemeanors is a decision for the courts. But guilty or not guilty, Bobby Baker is rather looking forward to his forthcoming ordeal, to judge from a luncheon conversation I had with him some time before he was indicted.

Moreover, if he is going to have to go to jail, he has no intention of going quietly and decorously. He intends to fight, kick and scream every inch of the way, and during the course of his fighting, kicking and screaming, a good many important persons are likely to get painfully sideswiped.

Baker and his counsel, the redoubtable Edward Bennett Williams, both point out that Baker's position in a court of law will be totally different from his position before the Jordan committee of the Senate, which first investigated his alleged wrongdoings. Williams will have the right to cross-examine hostile witnesses, and the court, unlike the committee, will operate under the rules of evidence. Baker has no intention of resorting to the Fifth Amendment in court, as he did before the Jordan committee.

It is no secret that the prospect of Bobby Baker's trial has induced a certain queasiness in the stomachs of a number of important politicians. The queasiness has been accentuated by the news that Bobby Baker also plans to write a book.

"I know what Lyndon Johnson is saying to himself right now," Bobby Baker remarked at lunch, his eyes both more shrewd and more humorous than ever. "He's saying to himself,

"What's that little s.o.b., Bobby Baker, writin' about me?"

If Lyndon Johnson is not saying something of the sort to himself, a lot of other people are. For if there ever was a man who knew precisely which skeleton was in which closet, it is Bobby Baker. In this respect, indeed, Bobby Baker is in the happy position of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood, younger brother of Lord Emsworth of Blandings Castle. The Hon. Galahad, a creation of P. G. Wodehouse, kept busy in his old age by writing his "recollections of his colorful career as a young man-about-town in the 'nineties." As a result, "all over the country, decorous Dukes and steady Viscounts, who had sown their wild oats in the society of the young Galahad, sat quivering in their slippers. . . . It was as if the Recording Angel had suddenly decided to rush into print."

The Hon. Galahad repeatedly used the bargaining power conferred on him by his memoirs to smooth the course of young love, or for other useful purposes. It is not impossible that it has also occurred to Bobby Baker that his memoirs, aside from their monetary value (his agent is said to be asking a price on the order of \$500,000), may give him a certain bargaining power.

He has already started work on his book, and his first several thousand words are devoted to the period before and after Lyndon Johnson was nominated for Vice President on the Democratic ticket. This first draft of the Baker memoirs describes a tiff between the future President and his young protégé. According to the Baker account, the tiff ended after several days in which neither spoke to the other, when the President magnanimously apologized. Also included is a description of candidate Johnson's side trip during the campaign, to Pickens, S.C., hometown of Bobby Baker, where the future President spoke many kind words about Pickens's most successful hometown boy.

All this is seemingly harmless stuff. But is it so harmless? Baker's trial is scheduled for October 17, just before the election. Sen. Hugh Scott, one of Baker's Republican inquisitors before the Jordan committee, is willing to "bet a thousand to one that the trial will be put off till after the election." The bet may be a good one.

Even so, the inevitable talk about the up-

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